ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – October 2014

Minutes

Chaired by Dr Julie Reid (SACOMM President)
Minutes by Dr Julie Reid
In attendance – refer to the attendance register

1   Welcoming

Dr Julie Reid welcomed and thanked all in attendance, and thanked NWU, in particular GP van Rheede van Oudtshoorn, for organising and hosting a successful SACOMM+40 conference.

2   Apologies

Apologies received from Marlene Wiggill (SACOMM treasurer), and the SACOMM members, Prof Herman Wasserman, Prof Ruth Teer-Tomaselli and Prof Keyan Tomaselli.

3   Constituting the meeting

Dr Julie Reid officially constituted the annual general meeting of SACOMM.

4   Matters for discussion

4.1   Feedback from SACOMM management committee

4.1   President: Year Report

Dr Reid opted to skip over the presidential year report since all points of discussion would in any case be discussed throughout the remainder of the agenda, and she did not want to offer duplicate discussion in the interest of time.

4.2   Financial Report (Treasurer Marlene Wiggill)

The treasurer was unable to attend this year's conference, but sent a full financial report to Dr Reid prior to the conference. The financial report of SACOMM was discussed in detail during the EXCO meeting on the previous day, and it is available to any SACOMM members who request it in the

interest of full transparency. The financial report was therefore not discussed at length at the AGM. SACOMM is in a good financial position, with adequate funds. Unlike in previous years we did not need to spend a large sum designing a new website, but only had to pay for hosting the current website, so this provided some extra funds. Some of the SACOMM funds will be allocated to the SACOMM History Project – Prof Arrie De Beer should provide the SACOMM EXCO with a detailed budget for this project asap. We will ask the treasurer to change our bank account from ABSA to another bank to decrease the bank charges.

The EXCO meeting discussed the possibility of using some of the funds in the SACOMM account on some conference expenses such as sponsoring a plenary speaker – we will discuss this with the 2015 conference organizers.

We would also like to allocate some of the funds to an administrative assistant for SACOMM.

4.3   Feedback Membership (Julie Reid)

Dr Reid has been running the membership portfolio for the past 6 years. Delegates to the conference are lazy about paying their SACOMM membership fees – they pay their conference registration fees but not their SACOMM membership fees (all conference delegates are also required to pay the SACOMM membership fee). The current process is also a bit admin heavy – persons need to organize two separate payments instead of one. Dr Reid proposed that the membership fee and the conference fee are amalgamated into one payment; the membership fee will be added onto the conference fee, and after each conference once the host university has collected all the conference fees, they then pay SACOMM the funds collected as membership fees. For example, if the conference fee is R2000, delegates will pay R2300 to the conference host, and after the conference the host institution will pay SACOMM R300 per delegate that attended the conference. This cuts down on some administrative tasks for SACOMM, and makes things easier for conference delegates, who then only need to organize one payment. Persons can still register and pay SACOMM directly for membership only, if they wish to remain members of SACOMM without attending the conference in a particular year.

Institutional membership:

Prof Danie Du Plessis asked if we could do an arrangement for institutional membership, as a new category of membership, based on numbers within a particular department; can we be sent one invoice for institutional membership for a number of staff members? Dr Reid – it is already possible for us to do this, just needs to be approved by this AGM. There were no objections to institutional membership – the motion was passed.

4.5   Feedback publication committee
Prof Sonja Verwey: Communicare has encountered some difficulty with the Department of Education – the DOE approach this by looking at the number of articles that are published against the number of articles that come from your institution, and in one case we had a number of articles from our institution, although they were from different departments. I am not sure how seriously we should take this or not, but there was a suggestion of merging Communicare and Communicatio.

So that's why we are trying to market Communicare a little differently from Communicatio. You never know how seriously to take these rumblings, but if things get difficult in future we may need to draw on the support of SACOMM and the other journal editors. We already have so few journals, we need to make sure that we don't lose any of them.

Dr Julie Reid: we had similar discussions at the AGM last year. Prof De Beer, as the Chair of the SACOMM publications committee, if there are any major developments please do pass the information on to all of us. Thanks to the three journal editors in attendance here for keeping us up to date.

4.6   Feedback Conference 2014 (GP van Rheede van Oudtshoorn)

GP van Rheede van Oudtshoorn: I will write a full report on this conference once the conference is over. There were a few challenges in organising this conference:

- Abstract submissions: all abstracts were included in the conference programme. For ease of process, on the SACOMM website, the interest groups could be defined in clearer terms, so that authors have a more detailed indication of which stream to submit their abstract to. Perhaps offer a few examples of 'typical titles' for each stream. Sometimes authors submit to a stream which is not appropriate, which makes things logistically difficult, because then the abstract must be redirected to a different set of reviewers.
- Authors neglect to submit their contact details on the abstract, causing a number of problems for the conference organizer who then needs to track them down via email etc. We should consider posting a template/form on the website for abstract submissions, so that details are included on the same document as the abstract (these details will be removed for the blind-peer review process).
- The use of the website was good – conference university has access to the backend of the website to post conference updates etc.
- We need to specify transport options for delegates.
- Duration of the conference: this conference is 3 days in length, which was necessary because of everything that needed to happen during this conference. We got a lot of queries for day-fees (persons who only want to register for one day). I don't feel our conference fees are all that high, to justify the option of day fees, when compared to other conferences. Also, the logistics behind administering day fees would put a big burden on the host university – it would be almost impossible to administer. An exception can be made for special guests/keynote speakers.
- The number of panel discussions also led to the extension of the conference programme.
- We limited the number of keynotes to only two, and tried to cover two very different angles with the two different keynotes.
- Conference registration: this is a major challenge. Delegates simply do not meet the deadline, which is a problem because the conference organizer needs to finalise numbers. Also, a number of institutions will register a number of staff members at once, requesting a collective invoice – but you still need the individual registration forms for details such as dietary requirements. So, this is a major challenge and a big administrative task.
- Conference budget: we are not running into a loss, and all looks good. I got a number of sponsors involved – R130 000 in sponsors. This took a lot of work, but made for a successful conference. Thankful to NWU campus gave us R50 000 in cash. Whoever hosts the conference in future: you need to work on the people in your immediate environment as

quickly as possible, and make them see that the conference can promote the campus/university. We also got good sponsorships from publishers. I tried to design clever sponsorship packages: not only offering a display to publishers, but also advertisements in the programme, platforms to speak, host book launches etc.

- We could consider using some of SACOMM's funds to sponsor civil society representatives to attend, which will really enrich discussions.
- Conference dates: you should always keep religious holidays in mind.
- Emerging scholars: we did a lot of effort to get a number of emerging scholars at the conference. The ratio at this conference is about 50% academics and 50% emerging scholars. The academics provide the depth while the emerging scholars create a vibe and enthusiasm. It is good to offer a discount for emerging scholars. We approached a number of universities and asked them to sponsor some emerging scholars.
- Thank you: to the EXCO of SACOMM – who have been very supportive to us in organising this conference. To all 24 student helpers – a big thank you to that team. Thank you to the entire group of personnel to the School of Communication Studies – each one played a role in organising different aspects of the conference.

Prof Sonja Verwey: Communicare was planning a special edition based on papers presented at the conference. This edition would still follow normal publication procedures etc.
Prof Arrie De Beer: Communicatio is planning a special edition, specifically linked to the SACOMM history project – ie. Papers dealing with the history of communications scholarship and the history of SACOMM. I have already approached a number of universities and sourced a number of authors. This will be an anniversary edition with the theme of the 40th anniversary of SACOMM.
Prof Pieter Fourie: in the special edition of Communicatio – the history of SACOMM is also the history of the practice of Communication studies in this country. We agreed on a few people who should be commissioned, some have already been commissioned, for about 6-8 papers. But some of the papers presented at this conference also very closely relate to this theme of the history of the field, and they can then additionally also be incorporated in the special edition. We have personally approached persons who delivered relevant papers during this conference to submit to the special edition of Communicatio.
Prof Arrie De Beer: agreed, and this has also already been discussed with Prof Verwey. There was also a call for the other journals to publish papers read at this conference. For example: The abstracts for media studies and journalism were sent to the editors of Ecquid Novi, so that the editors could contact the relevant authors directly asking them to submit for publication.
GP van Rheede van Oudtshoorn: I could send the corporate communication abstracts to Prof Very so that she can do the same for Communicare.

Dr Julie Reid: offered a huge thanks to GP for organising this years conference, which was a lot of work and a big success.

5   General issues

5.1   Marketing: generating new membership and approaching universities that have not historically been involved with SACOMM, or who have, and have not been involved in recent years.

Dr Julie Reid: Colin Chasi and I committed to extending SACOMM to universities not currently involved in SACOMM. There are two categories: 1) universities that once were involved in SACOMM

but are no longer involved, and 2) universities that have never been involved in SACOMM, which are predominantly the historically black universities. We have started a bit of a marketing drive to these universities – Colin has been appointed to do a bit of a tour of the country and meet with colleagues at these universities. He will do a presentation, to tell them more about what SACOMM is, what we do etc. This project is ongoing and will continue in 2015.

5.2   SACOMM affiliation to the NCA (National Communication Association - USA)

Dr Julie Reid: at last year's AGM I announced that it was time for SACOMM to renew its affiliation to the NCA in the USA. During 2014 I encountered some problems in this regard – the NCA requested that we send them SACOMM's articles of association, which we do not have because we are not registered as a legal entity or NGO. I sent them the following correspondence:

"To:

Mark Fernando <mfernando@natcom.org>;
...
Hello Mark,

Unfortunately, I cannot provide you with the articles of incorporation for SACOMM. We are not currently registered with a state/government agency and in our 40 year history we have never been registered as such. It is not a legal requirement for organisations in South Africa to register with the government, or with official state bodies in order to be recognised as legal entities or independent organisations.

I understand that it is quite common in many other countries for organisations such as ours to register with the appropriate state agency, but the context in South Africa is a little different to many other countries.

Moreover, at the current time we do not wish to register with the government in any respect. Although it is not a legal requirement for us to do so, I very much doubt that the members of SACOMM would endorse our registration with a state agency even if it were legally required. You must understand that we operate within a context where freedom of expression and academic freedoms are currently under threat from government and the political centres of power - regulatory means are often used as a mechanism to further stifle such freedoms, and we would therefore hope to avoid what we regard as unnecessary regulation on what we do, and therefore as a matter of principle, registration with a state agency.

I completely understand that this will result in an unsuccessful application to renew our affiliate status with the NCA, which I deeply regret. Nonetheless, given our context, I am unwilling to take the necessary steps on behalf of SACOMM to ensure our NCA affiliation.

Thanks for your invitation. While this is not a good outcome for us at this time, may I propose that your members discuss this matter at some point in future: ie. that the criteria for affiliate organisations could become more sensitive to the local contexts in which those organisations function.

I hope that we may nonetheless maintain an 'unofficial' relationship between SACOMM and the NCA going forward.

Thanks again,
Julie "

In this light, the NCA agreed to consider our application for affiliate status without the provision of articles for incorporation for SACOMM.

*At the time of the AGM in October 2014 we were still awaiting confirmation from the NCA on whether our application for affiliate status to the NCA would be renewed. Dr Julie Reid has since received notification that our affiliate status with the NCA has been renewed.

5.3   Host university for SACOMM 2015 & 2016 conferences

At last year's AGM (2013 at NMMU) AFDA committed to hosting the conference in 2015.

Developments since then:
IPRA, an international public relations association, are hosting their international conference in Johannesburg, at the Sandton Convention Centre, in September 2015.

Sonja Verwey: SACOMM is a member of the Council for Communication Management – and via this representation, the idea of conjoining the SACOMM 2015 conference to the IPRA conference was raised. IPRA does include academic papers, and the Council for Communication Management feels that it would be beneficial to have some collaboration because of this.

Julie Reid: we need to decide how this would work logistically with regard to the organisation of the 2015 conference. AFDA were confirmed as the hosts for 2015, and they are planning to host SACOMM at the Johannesburg campus, so it will be in the same city as the IPRA conference. Should we host the SACOMM conference at the same time as the IPRA conference, so that academics who would like to attend both conferences would have the option to do so?

Sonja Verwey: there is a little bit more to it than that. We were thinking of is: we would still have the usual SACOMM conference, because obviously there are other interest groups which may not be interested in the IPRA conference (Film, Media Studies and Journalism, General), which would mainly apply to those interested in the interest group of Corporate Communications. So, therefore, the idea is that SACOMM hosts its usual conference as it normally would, but then the track that would normally deal with Corporate Communications, would then be accommodated within the IPRA international conference. So, there would be a collaboration in terms of that particular track.

Julie Reid: are we then saying that the part of the SACOMM conference that is organised for the other three streams, for Film, Media Studies and Journalism, and Communication in General – would that then still be an AFDA responsibility?

Sonja Verwey: yes, my original thoughts were that AFDA would continue to organise things as such, and that we would then liaise with them surrounding the collaboration for the IPRA

conference and our Corporate Communications stream. The IPRA conference will give some great exposure to SACOMM.

Colin Chasi: The discussion we've had is about the complicated nature of the logistics of a co-hosting arrangement. So, you end up with UJ, IRPA, SACOMM and AFDA, in a 4-part coordinating committee: this sounds incredibly complex and probably will not be practical with regard to organising the conference. The fewer central parties the more effective the organising will be. Our colleagues from AFDA have been extremely willing to come up with the best solution possible, while acknowledging all practical issues. Thanks to them for this!

Mauritz Grundlingh: I agree with Colin in terms of the logistics: a four-way arrangement is going to be very difficult. But either way, whether it's about organising venues, and especially increasing the Film focus of the conference, AFDA would be willing to cover that side of things. But we're happy with whatever suits best, and even if we can assist with just a small part of the conference that's alright with us.

Johannes Froneman: I was very unhappy the last time we co-hosted SACOMM with an international conference (IAMCR in Durban), because SACOMM was just nowhere. We were totally over-whelmed by this international conference. And as an organisation we don't need a 'big daddy' – we can do a good conference on our own, as we did this week. So whatever decision is made, we shouldn't have the same sort of situation that we had with the IAMCR in 2012. Another matter that I am uncomfortable with: if you take out those people involved in Corporate Communications and they go off to the IPRA conference, how will that logistically work? Will the two conferences be at the same venue? Because often the only time we see our colleagues is at SACOMM, so it will be a pity if we are split apart.

Sonja Verwey: I don't think that is the idea. The idea is that the Corporate Communication people will still be at SACOMM for the communication theory side of things. This matter is a mere suggestion, but it has always been on the agenda at the Council for Communication Management – that communications bodies do not work together enough, that there is no collaboration etc. The academic day of the IPRA conference is a very different day to the rest of the IPRA conference – SACOMM Corporate Communications members could opt to attend SACOMM, but then just attend the academic day of the IPRA conference.

Arrie De Beer: perhaps what we are talking about here is a back-to-back conference, and not a co-hosting arrangement.

Sonja Verwey: agreed.

Julie Reid: this is a good opportunity to collaborate, especially for the Corporate Communications Stream. But as SACOMM we need to take the interests of all of our members into account, not just one stream. So, somehow we have to arrange our conference so that it satisfies all four streams. As a practical suggestion: the academic day that happens at the IPRA conference is something that only the corporate communications SACOMM members will want to partake in. So, perhaps we could run back-to-back OR concurrent conferences, but on the academic day of the IPRA conference we don't schedule

any Corporate Communications papers at the SACOMM conference – this way, should Corporate Communications SACOMM members wish to attend the academic day of the IPRA conference, they will be free to do so. They will then form the SACOMM representation at the IPRA conference. Its then not necessary to host our conference at the same venue as IPRA. All this really amounts to then, for us, is a bit of a shift in the programme, to accommodate the IPRA conference. But otherwise our conference continues as it normally would. It would then mean liaising with IPRA to determine the dates of their conference and the date, in particular of the academic day of the IPRA conference.

Colin Chasi: that is a good solution. Its also a necessary type of solution – it solves the practical problems. I am guessing that a significant number of colleagues will not be able to attend both, but it does give people the opportunity to make the most of their trip to Johannesburg and get two conferences out of one trip, if they wish to do so.

Julie Reid: Corporate Communications members then will have the option of attending two conferences in one. The interest group convenor for Corporate Communications will be tasked with explaining this and giving the relevant information to the Corporate Communications Stream. For example, if a Corporate Communications SACOMM member would prefer to present a paper at the IPRA conference, they would have to follow the IPRA abstract submission procedures etc, and not the SACOMM submission procedures.

But this really only effects that one SACOMM stream for one day. It will also affect AFDA to the degree that the SACOMM conference would have to be hosted on dates that would be set by IPRA.

Mauritz Grundlingh: as it stands, the IPRA conference is in the term break, so this suits AFDA.

Julie Reid: thanks for this discussion. Then we conclude, by saying that AFDA remains the SACOMM conference host for 2015, but taking all of these arrangements into account. Mauritz – please confirm this with your colleagues and come back to us about it.

Mauritz Grundlingh: agreed.

2016: UFS

University of the Free State has expressed interest in hosting the SACOMM conference in 2016. There were no objections at the AGM. UFS is confirmed as the host university for the 2016 SACOMM conference. Thanks to Johan De Wet.

5.4   SACOMM lifelong fellowships

Last night we awarded two Lifelong Fellowships: Arrie De Beer and Pieter Fourie.

5.5   SACOMM and the Right2Know Campaign

This is a standing item on the agenda of the AGM. At the 2011 AGM in Pretoria we agreed to become a signatory of the Right2Know Campaign. R2K is constantly looking for academics to perform research related to their campaigning work within the area of communications rights – SACOMM members are encouraged to contact SACOMM's R2K representative (Julie Reid) if interested in performing research for R2K. There has been very little academic involvement on the Right2Know Campaign, apart from the colleagues working on the Media Policy and Democracy Project. R2K is an enormous opportunity for academics – we have never seen such a large civil society led and ground-up collation dealing specifically with issues related directly to our field of scholarship, and we, as a community of scholars should make an effort to be involved and make a contribution.

6. Any other business

6.1 Motion from Danie Du Plessis

Prof Du Plessis put forward the motion to have the option of institutional membership to SACOMM – this has already been dealt with and the motion passed.

6.2 Motion from Prof Arrie De Beer

Motions are drawn from the report on the history of SACOMM:

The AGM should decide the following:

- Arrie De Beer's continued involvement with the SACOMM History Project
- The Special Edition of Communicatio
- Project budget and SACOMM History Committee; proposed committee includes Keyan Tomaselli, Julie Reid, Colin Chasi, Arrie De Beer
- EXCO to take these issues further.

Julie Reid:

- On the first matter: last year's AGM appointed Arrie De Beer as the coordinator of the SACOMM History Project and did not stipulate a time limit on that – so there is no reason why Arrie should not continue with this project until its conclusion. There were no objections from the floor.
- The special edition of Communicatio – has been discussed already. There will be a call-for-papers coming out soon.

Arrie De Beer: the budget currently stands at R30 000, which does not include any funding for myself. But it includes the appointment of Cas Vorster for 5 months, and his travel costs to come to this conference.

Julie Reid: our treasurer will deal with this matter. We have the funds available. Its an important project, and the expenditure of funds on this project were already approved at

last year's AGM. Arrie – please send me a detailed budget/itemized bill for all costs incurred.

Arrie de Beer - SACOMM history committee: this will be an email committee which will act as a sounding board.

Julie Reid: this committee has already been functioning in an adhoc informal way, and perhaps we should just keep it that way?

Arrie De Beer: agreed.
EXCO matters for discussion, include:
We eventually need to establish an archive policy, which we currently don't have.
We need a permanent address and place to store documents – we need to start storing our documents on the cloud, but also in hard-copy.

Julie Reid: we would like to part-time employ an administrative assistant for SACOMM, who could handle these and other administrative tasks. We have some funds available for this. I cannot do the admin all by myself anymore. At previous AGMs we have said that we will employ a good reliable postgraduate – but the problem is that these persons tend to move on, they get full-time employment elsewhere, and you lose a lot of institutional memory with them, as well as having to employ someone new and train a new person from scratch. The suggestion: we could pay someone for a half-day's work once a week. Perhaps this could be offered to a admin person or a secretary already working at one of our universities who would be willing to take on this little bit of extra work and earn some extra funds.

Danie Du Plessis: why don't we start negotiations with the Unisa library staff, to handle SACOMM's official document archive for us?

Arrie De Beer: SACOMM could decide on a fixed office, perhaps at Unisa? The movement of the SACOMM office from one campus to another causes confusion, and means that a lot of documents and information inevitably gets lost.

Julie Reid: I am going to actively head-hunt an admin person for SACOMM now. I will start at Unisa – I have one year of my presidency left, so I will at least be able to assist and train this person over the next year. If I cannot source someone at Unisa, I will start to look elsewhere.

Arrie De Beer: agreed.

7.   Meeting adjourns

Julie Reid adjourned the AGM.